

AN ELUSIVE STORY.—BY E. J. RATH

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Kent walked listlessly into the city room, sauntered over to his desk at the farther end, tossed his hat upon it, lighted a cigaret, glanced at the clock, and sat down.

He unfolded a couple of "evening" editions, and was giving them a cursory and indifferent examination when he heard the sharp call:

"Kent!"

Indolently he unfolded himself out of the swivel chair and strolled across to the city desk. Haskins was sitting there, snapping his fingers in a nervous way and glaring at him through his glasses.

"Well?" he snapped.

"I got it," said Kent, lounging into an empty chair.

"Any trouble?" he asked.

"No; it was easy enough."

"Good story?"

Kent nodded.

"About the way I gave it to you?"

"Yes, just about."

"Who'd you see?" asked Haskins.

"I saw him first."

"Did he admit it?"

"Oh, yes; he didn't make any trouble about that."

"Give a reason?"

"No; just admitted it. He said he'd leave the reason to her, if she wanted to give any."

"And you saw her, I suppose?"

Kent nodded again, and his glance wandered out of the window.

"Did you get any pictures?"

Kent shook his head, and Haskins pursed his lips in momentary annoyance.

"Well, go ahead with you stuff, anyhow. I'll see what can be done," he said.

For nearly half an hour Kent fed the machine with words and sentences and paragraphs, as though he himself were but an automatic attachment. Then he picked up three

sheets of copy and carried them over to Haskins' desk.

"All here?" asked Haskins, with a glance at the clock.

"I think everything's covered," said Kent.

"Well, stay around till I read it, anyhow. I may want to ask you something about it."

Kent went over to McCann's desk and opened a perfunctory conversation about that gentleman's poolroom crusade. But his mind was on Haskins.

"Kent!"

His name was called explosively, and with a sigh he went to answer.

Haskins motioned to the vacant chair and picked up the typewritten sheets.

"Are these notes, or is this the story?" he inquired, with elaborate sarcasm.

"The story," he answered evenly.

"Well, it's a hell of a story. Is that all you can write?"

Kent shrugged his shoulders.

"What's the trouble, Kent? Don't you want to write it?"

"Can't say I do," answered Kent, slowly. "You know, she asked—"

"Of course, they all ask," broke in Haskins, after shaking his head jerkily. "So long as we've got to carry the story, the only way to handle it is to do our very best with it."

Kent made a brief sign of understanding and went back to his desk.

After a time he began to write, very slowly and carefully. He covered half a sheet, lifted the carriage and was reading it when Haskins came over and threw one leg across the edge of the desk.

"She just had me on the phone," he said.

"I told her we couldn't do anything."

"What sort of a person is she?" asked Haskins.

"Well, she isn't young," said Kent,